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Washington in Domestic Life.

From Original Letters and Manuscripts. By Richard Rush.

PHILADELPHIA: J. B. LIPPINCOTT AND CO.

1857.

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GENTLEMEN :—

IN confiding to your house the publication of this brief paper on some points in the character of Washington, I beg leave to say, that for any deficiency in the cost of publishing, after all your charges in having it fitly done are defrayed, I will be responsible.

And in the very remote probability of the sale of a production so limited as this, in the face of a thousand better things on Washington's character already before the world, ever yielding anything in the way of profit after your proper expenditures are all satisfied, it will go, however small, to

the Washington Monument Fund, existing in the metropolis of our country.

I am, gentlemen,

Your very faithful

And obedient servant,

RICHARD RUSH.

SYDENHAM, NEAR PHILADELPHIA, February 28, 1857.

TO MESSRS.

J. B. LIPPINCOTT AND CO.,

PUBLISHERS,

PHILADELPHIA.

TO

CHARLES J. INGERSOLL.

This literary trifle is hardly worth a dedication; yet it has dared to touch, though with incompetent hands, a high subject, and, trifle as it is, I dedicate it to you. At an agreeable little dinner at your table lately, where we had the new Vice-President, Mr. Breckenridge, whose maternal stock, the Stanhope Smiths and Witherspoons, so rich in intellect, we knew at Princeton, you said we had been friends for upwards of sixty years. You were right, for we were merry boys together in

Philadelphia before our college days at Princeton;
and I may here add, that our friendship never has
been interrupted.

RICHARD RUSH.

INTRODUCTORY EXPLANATION.

THE manuscript or paper here published was prepared from a collection of original letters from General Washington on matters, for the most part, purely domestic and personal, addressed to Colonel Tobias Lear, his private Secretary for a part of the time he was President; and then, and during periods much longer, his confidential friend. They came into my hands through the voluntary kindness of Mrs. Lear, of the city of Washington, the estimable relict of Colonel Lear, and niece of Mrs. Washington, whose friendship it was my good lot and that of my family to enjoy; as we did that of Colonel Lear while he lived. The latter died in Washington in 1816. Mrs. Lear first informed me of these letters ten

or twelve years ago when in Washington, and offered them to my perusal and examination, telling me to take them home and retain them as long as I chose, and use them as I thought best, for she knew I would not abuse this privilege. I brought them home as requested, being then too much engaged in the business of the Smithsonian Institution as one of the Regents on its first organization, to examine them while in Washington. She afterwards read, approved, and for some time had in her hands the paper I drew up from them.

It consisted of notices of, and extracts from these original letters, the matter being abridged, connecting links used, and omissions made where the great author himself marked them private or from parts otherwise not necessary to go before the world. So guarded and prepared, and with a commentary interwoven, Mrs. Lear left its publication to my discretion. I returned the original letters, in number more than thirty, in the state I received them from her. I never allowed

any one of them to be copied; but gave one away, or two, for I am not at this day certain which, to Mr. Polk while he was President of the United States, having first asked and obtained Mrs. Lear's consent for that purpose. She also gave me two of them not very long before her decease, which I prize the more as her gift. I have other original letters from the same immortal source, the valued donation in 1830, of the son of Colonel Lear, Lincoln Lear, Esquire.

This excellent lady, who long honored me with her friendship and confidence in the above and other ways, after surviving Colonel Lear forty years, died last December in Washington. There she had continued to live as his widow; being all this time in possession of, and as I supposed owning, these original letters. There she lived, beloved as a pattern of the Christian virtues, and enjoying the esteem of the circle around her as an interesting relict of days becoming historical; but ever elevating in the associations they recall. Now that she is gone, I am induced to give to the public

the paper in question. In doing so I have the best grounds for believing that I perform an act that would have been grateful to her were she living. She was fully informed of my intention to publish it and could not but be sensible that the long respect and affectionate attachment of General Washington which her husband enjoyed, as so indelibly stamped upon these letters, is a record of his probity, capacity, and sterling worth, than which none could ever be more precious, or be likely to endure longer. This consideration it might be thought affects only the descendants of Colonel Lear or others devoted to his memory; but I have ventured to think that the publication may not be wholly unacceptable on broader grounds. Nothing, indeed, in authentic connection with Washington's great name can ever be unwelcome to the American people; and although it may have happened that some few of these letters have heretofore found their way into print in whole or in part, the number, as far as was known to Mrs. Lear, is believed to be very small. Hence

the publication need not be forborne on that account; more especially if it should be found to carry with it the slightest general interest in the form now presented.

In regard to the narrative of Arnold's treason as given by the great Chief at his table at Mount Vernon and afterwards written down by Colonel Lear, which I have appended to the synopsis of the letters, it was not within Mrs. Lear's knowledge, nor is it within mine at present, that it has ever been in print before.

RICHARD RUSH.

SYDENHAM, NEAR PHILADELPHIA, February, 1857.

WASHINGTON

IN

DOMESTIC LIFE.

When first I opened and cursorily read the original letters from General Washington, mentioned in the foregoing introductory explanation, and noticed the domestic topics which ran so largely through them, they struck me as possessing peculiar interest. They were of value as coming from that venerated source, and doubly so, considering how little is known, through his own correspondence, of his domestic life; scarcely, in fact, any of its details. Reading the letters again, I found the matter to be somewhat more varied than my first eager inspection of them, as

hastily unfolded, had led me to suppose; but they were desultory, and much broken as to dates. The occasional mixture of other matter, especially public matter, with the domestic topics, did not diminish the interest of the letters, but the contrary. In this publication I follow the order of the dates. Where wide chasms occur, I have merely supplied a link in the chain by an explanatory remark here and there, in aid of the reader, not hazarding other remarks until all the letters are mentioned. Thus much as to the plan. I proceed to speak of the letters themselves.

The first in date is of the fifth of September, 1790. It is written in Philadelphia, where Washington had just then arrived from New York, Mr. Lear, as may be inferred from it, being in New York. He states that he would proceed onward to Mount Vernon on the day following if Mrs. Washington's health would permit, as she had been indisposed since their arrival in Philadelphia; that before he arrived, the city corporation had taken the house of Mr. Robert Morris for his

residence, but that it would not be sufficiently commodious without additions.

> [This house was in Market Street on the south side near Sixth Street. The market house buildings then stopped at Fourth Street; the town in this street extended westward scarcely as far as Ninth Street; good private dwellings were seen above Fifth Street; Mr. Morris's was perhaps the best; the garden was well inclosed by a wall.]

He describes the house, remarking that even with the proposed additions the gentlemen of his family would have to go into the third story, where also Mr. Lear and Mrs. Lear would have to go; and that there would be no place for his own study and dressing-room but in the back building; there are good stables, and the coach-house would hold his carriages; but his coachmen and postilions would have to sleep over the stable where there was no fireplace, though the room might

be warmed by a stove. The other servants could sleep in the house, he adds, if, in addition to the present accommodations, a servants' hall were built with one or two lodging-rooms over it. These are samples of the particularity with which he writes. He tells Mr. Lear that he had left his coach and harness with the coachmaker, Mr. Clarke, in Philadelphia, for repairs, and requests him to see that they are well done and at the time appointed. The residue of the letter relates to the bringing on of his servants from New York. It begins "Dear Sir," and after saying that Mrs. Washington joins with him in best wishes to Mrs. Lear, concludes, "I am sincerely and affectionately yours, Geo. Washington." The letter fills the four pages of a sheet of letter paper in his compact but bold and legible hand, with a few interlineations made very distinctly.

The next letter is dated Mount Vernon, September 20, 1790. After saying a few words about Mr. Morris's house, he reverts to the subject of

bringing his servants from New York to Philadelphia, naming several of them, but doubting the expediency of bringing all by sea, especially the upper servants. The steward and his wife are mentioned as perhaps best not to be brought at all; he has no wish to part with them: first, because he does not like to be changing; and secondly, because he did not know how to supply their places, but was much mistaken if the expenses of the second table, where the steward presided, had not greatly exceeded the proper mark; he suspected there was nothing brought to his own table of liquors, fruit, or other things, that had not been used as profusely at the steward's; that if his suspicions were unfounded he should be sorry for having entertained them; and if not, it was at least questionable whether any successor of * * * * * * might not do the same thing, in which case there might be a change without a benefit. He leaves it with Mr. Lear whether to retain him or not, provided he thought him honest, of which he would be better able to judge on comparing his

accounts with those of his former steward, which he (the General) had not done. He concludes, "with sincere regard and affection, I am yours, Geo. Washington."

[At this epoch, the seat of government had just been removed from New York to Philadelphia, making it necessary for General Washington to establish himself in the latter city, which leads him into the details given and to follow.]

The third letter is from Mount Vernon, September 27, 1790. It begins by saying that since his last, the date of which is not recollected, as he kept no copies of these letters, two had been received from Mr. Lear, of which he gives the dates. He approves of his mode of removing the furniture, and asks, "How have you disposed of the Pagoda? It is a delicate piece of stuff, and will require to be handled tenderly."

Alluding to the house in which he had lived in

New York, the lease of which was unexpired, he says that he expected * * * * * would endeavor to impose his own terms when he found he could not get it off his hands; we are in his power and he must do what he pleases with us. As the "Lustre" is paid for and securely packed up, and may suit the largest drawing-room at Mr. Morris's house in Philadelphia, he does not incline to part with it; there is a mangle in the kitchen, which Mrs. Morris proposes to leave, taking his mangle instead; [a mangle was a machine for washing or pressing, then in use, and a fixture, I think;] he would not object provided his was as good, but not if he would be the gainer by exchanging. He concludes, Mrs. Washington and all the family joining in best wishes to Mrs. Lear and himself, "I am your sincere friend and affectionate servant," signing his name as before.

The next is dated Mount Vernon, October 3, 1790. In this letter he refers to the declaration of the ministers of Britain and Spain as published

in the newspapers,* and requests Mr. Lear to give him the earliest information of these or any other interesting matters, beyond what the newspapers say; remarking that Mr. Jefferson's absence from New York [Mr. Jefferson was then Secretary of State] might be the means of delaying the receipt of official advices to him longer than usual. He requests Mr. Lear to use his endeavors for ascertaining the best schools in Philadelphia with a view to placing Washington Custis, Mrs. Washington's grandson, at the best. If the college is under good regulations, and they have proper tutors to prepare boys of his standing for the higher branches of education, he makes a quære if it would not be better to put him there at once, the presumption being that a system may prevail there by which the gradations are better connected than in schools which have no correspondence with each other. Adverting again to his

* Alluding probably to the Nootka Sound controversy then pending between these courts.

servants, he reminds Mr. Lear that no mention had been made of John's wife, and asks what he understands to be her plans. He incloses a letter from John to her, and another from James to his "del Toboso." [These were four of his black servants.] He requests him when able to get at Count d'Estaing's letters to send him a transcript of what he says of a bust he had sent him of Neckar, together with a number of prints of Neckar, and of the Marquis la Fayette; and concludes in the same cordial and affectionate style as before.

Mount Vernon, October 10, 1790. This is next in date. The early parts of this letter have reference to the steps for removing his furniture and servants from New York; to the getting rid of the house still upon his hands there, and to the proper care and instruction of his niece, Miss Harriet Washington, when he should be established in Philadelphia. Referring again to Washington Custis's education, whom he had adopted as a son and in whom he appears to have taken great in-

terest,* he wishes inquiry to be made as to the higher branches taught at the college with a view to placing his nephews, George and Lawrence Washington, at that Institution in Philadelphia. He speaks very kindly of these nephews, and of their desire for improvement. Having left the languages, they are engaged, he adds, under Mr. Harrow, in Alexandria, in the study of the mathematics and learning French. Concludes as usual.

Next comes one from Mount Vernon of October 27, 1790. He tells Mr. Lear that on his return from a twelve days' excursion up the Potomac, he finds three letters from him, which he

* The affectionate interest General Washington took in this adopted son is well known. Mr. Custis still lives (1856) and still dispenses the hospitalities of Arlington, his estate and home in Virginia near the city of Washington; which it overlooks from its beautiful heights. His house exhibits paintings, illustrative of our revolutionary annals, the work of his amateur pencil; whilst the productions of his patriotic pen have charmed the public by the anecdotes they record in attractive ways of the personal, rural, and other habits of the great Chief.

acknowledges under their dates, and is very glad to learn that he had arrived in Philadelphia, and that the servants and furniture had got safely there. It is equally agreeable to him that the steward and his wife had come. He leaves to Mr. L. the arrangement of the furniture, with remarks of his own as to its disposition in some of the rooms; and wishes the rent of Mr. Morris's house to be fixed before the day of his going into it. He desired to pay a just value; more he had no idea would be asked; but intimates his fears that the committee [of the city councils of Philadelphia is probably meant] were holding back under an intention that the rent should be paid by the public, to which he would not consent. It would be best, he thinks, if all the servants could be accommodated without using the loft over the stable, as no orders he could give them would prevent their carrying lights there, if they were to use it as lodgers. By return of the hand that takes this and other letters from him to the Alexandria post-office, he hopes to receive later dates

from Mr. Lear, and, possibly, something more indicative of peace or war between Spain and England; and concludes, "I am your affectionate friend, Geo. Washington."

Mount Vernon, October 31, 1790, is the next date. After expressing concern lest his house in Philadelphia should not be ready in time, and pointing out arrangements for his journey to Philadelphia, he speaks again of his carriage at the coachmaker's in Philadelphia. He thinks that a wreath round the crests on the panels would be more correspondent with the Seasons [allegorical paintings probably in medallion], which were to remain there, than the motto; and that the motto might be put on the plates of the harness, but leaves it to Mr. Lear and the coachmaker to adopt which they thought best when the whole was looked at, as he could not himself see it as a whole. He speaks of the boarding schools in Philadelphia, and is anxious that full and careful inquiry be made with a view to securing proper

advantages in the education of his niece, but to be made in a way not to give any expectation of a preference between rival seminaries, as he had come to no decision in regard to his niece. As his family on removing to Philadelphia will have new connections to form with tradespeople, he requests Mr. Lear to find out those in each branch who stand highest for skill and fair dealing, saying it is better to be slow in choosing than be under any necessity of changing. Concludes "with affectionate regards I am your sincere friend, G. W."

Mount Vernon, November 7, 1790. A letter full of minute details. It sets out with expressing his renewed anxiety respecting the education of his adopted son Washington Custis, remarking that if the *schools* in the college are under good masters, and are as fit for boys of his age [he was probably about eight at this time, for we were schoolmates in Philadelphia at the dates of the earliest of these letters] as a private school would

be, he is still of opinion he had better be placed there in the first instance; but the propriety of the step will depend: 1. Upon the character and ability of the masters; 2. Upon the police and discipline of the school; and thirdly, upon the number of the pupils. If there be too many pupils, justice cannot be done to them whatever the ability of the masters, adding that what ought to be the due proportion is in some measure matter of opinion, but that an extreme must be obvious to all. He leaves it with Mr. Lear to decide that point if nothing else should be finally resolved upon by himself before he reaches Philadelphia. He next incloses a letter from Mr. Gouverneur Morris, then in Paris [but not our minister at the French court at that time] with the bill of charges for certain articles which he had requested him to send from Paris. The plated ware far exceeds in price the utmost bounds of his calculation; but as he is persuaded Mr. Morris had only done what he thought right, he requests Mr. Lear to make immediate payment

in manner as he points out. Among the articles of this plated ware, were wine coolers, for holding four decanters of cut glass, also sent by Mr. Morris; and he seems as little satisfied with the size and fashion of these coolers, from the description he has received of them, as with their unexpected cost. He thinks more appropriate ones of real silver might be made, the pattern being different and work lighter, giving his own ideas of a pattern, and a little draft of it, and requesting Mr. Lear to talk to a silversmith on the matter, remarking that perhaps those sent by Mr. Morris might give hints for the pattern; which, if not found too heavy, as he had not yet seen them, might after all answer. He approves of the Pagoda's standing in the smallest drawing-room where Mr. Lear had placed it. Whether the *green* curtain or a new *yellow* one is to be used for the staircase window in the hall, may depend on his getting an exact match in color for the former; in things of this sort one would not regard a small additional expense, to save the eye from bad con-

trasts. He expresses the hope that his study will be in readiness by the time he arrives, and that the rubbish and other litter made by those "men of mortar and the carpenters," will be removed so that the yard may be made and kept as clean as the parlor. This, he says, is essential, as, by the alterations made in the house, the back rooms had become the best and there was an uninterrupted view from them into the yard, especially from the dining-room. He concludes by saying that as Mrs. Washington writes to Mrs. Lear, he would only add his best wishes for her and affectionate regards for himself, "being your sincere friend, G. W."

Mount Vernon, November 12, 1790. This letter is a duplicate written to inform Mr. Lear that he depended upon P*****'s coach, horses, and driver, for taking on the children to Philadelphia. His reasons for writing the duplicate was, that Giles (one of his servants), who was sent on Wednesday to Alexandria with his first letter with

directions that if the stage had gone to pursue it to Georgetown so as to overtake the mail, had put the letter into the hands of a passenger, who "all but forced it from him," so anxious was this passenger to do an obliging thing, as he "knew General Washington." This passenger told his name, but it was "so comical," he could not recollect it. This was Giles's story; and the General adds that as he knew what little dependence was to be placed on the punctual conveyance of letters by a private hand, he writes this duplicate by post to repeat his request that Mr. Lear will inform him, by return of post, what he has to expect with *certainty* as to the coach hired for taking on a part of his family to Philadelphia. His house is full of company, he adds, and concludes as usual.

Mount Vernon, November 14, 1790. This letter manifests his concern about the house in Philadelphia; for, besides that it is still unfinished, the rent, he says, has not yet been fixed, though he has long since wished it; he is at a loss to under-

stand it all. He hopes that the additions and alterations made on his account whilst neat, have not been in an extravagant style. The latter would not only be contrary to his wishes but repugnant to his interest and convenience, as it would be the means of keeping him from the use and comforts of the house until a later day; and because the furniture and everything else must then be in accordance with its expensive finish, which would not agree with his present furniture, and he had no wish to be taxed to suit the taste of others. The letter is of more length than usual and marked "private;" being, with one other, the only ones in the collection so marked. I will, therefore, notice its contents no further than barely to add, that in a part where he alludes to the still possible intention of making the public in Philadelphia pay his rent, his terms of dissent become very emphatic. In reference to his coach, he would rather have heard that, as repaired, it was "*plain* and elegant" than "*rich* and elegant." Conclusion as usual.

Mount Vernon, Nov. 17, 1790. This, he says, is a very bad day. He is just setting off for Alexandria to a dinner given to him by the citizens of that place. The caps (jockey caps) of Giles and Paris (two of his postilions) being so much worn that they will be unfit for use by the time he has completed his journey to Philadelphia, he requests that new ones may be made, the tassels to be of better quality than the old ones; and that a new set of harness may be made for the leaders, with a postilion saddle; the saddle-cloth of which to be like the hammer-cloth, that all may be of a piece when necessary to use six horses. [This he sometimes did in travelling.] The letter concludes as usual.

"Spurriers," November 23, 1790.

[He is now on his journey to Philadelphia in his own travelling carriage with Mrs. Washington; the children, and the servants in attendance on the children, being in the stage-coach hired for the occasion.]

He dates from this tavern twelve or fourteen miles south of Baltimore. The roads, he says, are infamous—no hope of reaching Baltimore that night, as they had not yet gone to dinner but were waiting for it. The letter is only of a few lines, and evidently written in haste, though he never makes apologies on that account.

Georgetown, March 28, 1791.

[The General and family arrived in Philadelphia and took possession of Mr. Morris's house. The session of Congress passed over. It was the short session. He was now on his return to Mount Vernon, having reached the above town on the Maryland side of the Potomac, from which he dates.]

This letter is on his private affairs. He expresses dissatisfaction at the conduct of * * * * * * one of his agents in the State of ———, in letting out his property and receiving his rents; he is too well

acquainted, he says, with facts that bear upon the case to be imposed upon by the tale he tells; and even his own letter proves him to be what he would not call him.

Mount Vernon, April 3, 1791. This letter is also in part on his private affairs. It contains further complaints of this agent. In the closing parts of it [there being at this time growing apprehensions of trouble with the Indians] he makes the remark, that until we could restrain the turbulence and disorderly conduct of our own borderers, it would be in vain he feared to expect peace with the Indians; or that they would govern their own people better than we did ours.

[It was in the following autumn that General St. Clair's army was defeated by them in the neighborhood of the Miami Villages.]

Mount Vernon, April 6, 1791. A short letter. It mentions his intention of continuing his journey

southward the next day; his horses being well recruited, he hopes they will go on better than they have come from Philadelphia. He incloses Mr. Lear, who remains in Philadelphia, some letters to be put on file, and requests him to pay a man who had been working in the garden.

[The journey southward next day was the commencement of his tour to the Southern States, having made one into the Northern States before he became President. Having completed his tour, he passed several days in Georgetown to execute the powers vested in him for fixing on a place for the permanent seat of government for the United States under the new constitution.]

Richmond, April 12, 1791. This is a letter of four closely written pages, mainly, though not exclusively, about his servants and the difficulties with them under the non-slavery laws of Philadelphia; but as he requests that the knowledge of

its contents and the sentiments he expresses may be confined to Mrs. Lear and Mrs. Washington, I notice no more of it.

Savannah, May 13, 1791. He here says that the continual hurry into which he was thrown by entertainments, visits, and ceremonies in the course of his southern tour, left him scarcely a moment he could call his own. He gives directions as to where his letters are to be sent that they may strike him at the proper points whilst travelling; his horses are much worn down, he says, by the bad roads, especially the two he bought just before leaving Philadelphia, "and my old white horse."

Fredericksburg, Virginia, June 12, 1791. He informs Mr. Lear that he had reached this place the day preceding, and expected to get back to Mount Vernon the day following. He would remain there until the 27th, which was the day appointed for him to meet the commissioners at Georgetown to fix on the spot for the public

buildings to be erected in the new Federal City, and writes to give Mr. Lear this foreknowledge of his movements.

Mount Vernon, June 15, 1791. The early part of this letter relates to certain blank commissions signed and left with Mr. Lear to be filled up under the direction and advice of the Secretary of the Treasury. He next adverts to a vacancy in one of the United States judgeships—that of the district of Pennsylvania—by the death of the late incumbent. Some have applied, he says, for the appointment, and others will. In reference to this and other offices that will be vacant (naming them), he wishes Mr. Lear to get the best information he can as to those who it is thought would fill them "with the greatest ability and integrity." Several meritorious persons, he adds, have already been brought to his view.

He is glad to hear that the affairs of his household in Philadelphia go on so well, and tells Mr. Lear it might not be improper for him to hint how

foolish it would be in the servants left there to enter into any combinations for supplanting those in authority [meaning the upper servants]. The attempt would be futile, and must recoil upon themselves; and next, admitting that they were to make the lives of the present steward and housekeeper so uneasy as to induce them to quit, others would be got, and such, too, as would be equally if not more rigid in exacting the duty required of the servants below them; the steward and housekeeper were indispensably necessary in taking trouble off of Mrs. Washington's hands and his own, and would be supported in the line of their duty, whilst any attempt to counteract them would be considered as the strongest evidence the other servants could give of their unworthiness. A good and faithful servant, he adds, was never afraid of having his conduct looked into, but the reverse.

Mount Vernon, June 19, 1791. He acknowledges the receipt of several letters from Mr. Lear, and approves what he has done. He tells him

that in the fall he shall want blankets for his servants and people* at Mount Vernon; and the summer being the best time for buying them, he wishes inquiry to be made on this subject, saying he should want about two hundred. He wants to see Paine's answer to Burke's pamphlet on the French Revolution, and requests it may be sent to him. He says that "Paris" has grown to be so lazy and self-willed that John, the coachman, says he has no sort of government of him, as he did nothing that he was told to do, and everything he was not. The General adds that his incapacity as a postilion was such that he had determined to leave him behind when returning to Philadelphia, which would make one or two boys necessary in his stable at that place, as assistants, and asks whether it might not be possible to find emigrant Germans to answer the purpose. He concludes, "Be assured of the esteem and regard of yours affectionately, G. W."

* The latter mean his slaves.

Mount Vernon, September 26, 1791. He refers to the house in Philadelphia; says that he never expressed any dissatisfaction at want of accommodation in it since he got rid of the workmen; and that that supposition must *not* be adduced as a motive for causing a *public edifice* to be built for his use or occupancy; that he has no intention of interfering with the politics of Pennsylvania, or the household accommodations of his successors in the Presidency; but that, for himself, personally, he had wholly declined living in any public building. This subject appears to have engaged some of his sensibility, and he tells Mr. Lear he is glad to learn he has put in writing his views in regard to it, as that will protect him against misconception on any point.

Mount Vernon, October 7, 1791. He writes again about the blankets; some have been offered to him in Alexandria, but he likes neither the size nor price, and speaks of those to be had in Philadelphia as intolerably narrow. He cannot think

of being disappointed in his supply, as his people would suffer in the ensuing winter. He wants one hundred of the largest size and best quality, and one hundred of the middle size but *good* in quality. I recollect asking you if among my pamphlets you had seen the journal of my tour to the French (the word *position* was probably omitted here) on *La beauf* in the year 1753. I understood you no; but Mrs. Washington thinks you said yes. Pray decide the point for us—I have searched in vain for it here.

Mount Vernon, October 14, 1791. In this letter he begins by saying he is glad of the intimation given of the intentions of the minister of France [not stated what they are], and pleased though distressed at the information that the 24th instant is the day for the meeting of Congress. He had supposed it to be the 31st, and intended to spend Monday and possibly Tuesday in Georgetown; but now he would endeavor to reach Bladensburg on Monday night and lose no time

afterwards in pursuing his journey onward to Philadelphia, as scarce any time would be left to him for preparing his communications when the session opened, if the members were punctual in attending. This makes it the more necessary, he says, that Mr. Lear should look with accuracy, and without delay, into his speeches and the laws of the past sessions; that all might be at hand for his own review and consideration. And he requests Mr. Lear, should anything else have occurred to him as fit for recommendation or communication in his speech to Congress, to note it, that it might be ready for his consideration in case it should not be among his own memorandums. The conclusion is in his usually cordial way.

This session of Congress passed over. It was the long one, and ran into May 1792. I find in the collection only three letters to Mr. Lear dated in that year. The first is from Mount Vernon, July 30, '92, soon after he had left Philadelphia, and is familiarly descriptive of his journey home-

wards. His horses plagued him a good deal, he says, and the sick mare, owing to a dose of physic administered the night he reached Chester, was so much weakened as to be unable to carry Austin [one of the postilions] further than the Susquehannah; had to be led thence to Hartford, where she was left, and two days afterwards, "gave up the ghost." As he travelled on, he heard great complaints of the Hessian fly, and of rust or mildew in the wheat, and believed that the damage would be great in some places; but that more was said than the case warranted, and on the whole the crops would be abundant. On arriving in Georgetown, he found many well-conceived plans for the public buildings in the new city, and remarks that it was a pleasure to him to find in our new country so much architectural ability displayed. Concludes, "I am your affectionate friend, G. W."

The second is dated Mount Vernon, September 21, '92. He tells Mr. Lear that he had written

him but one letter since arriving at Mount Vernon, but was on the eve of writing a second when his of the 5th of August got to hand, with such information of his movements (Mr. Lear having been away from Philadelphia) as might now enable him to direct a letter to him without danger of its "reverberating back." He thanks him for the information afforded in his letter of the 5th of August and in another of the 21st of July; says he has nothing agreeable of a domestic nature to relate. Poor George [the General is here supposed to allude to Mr. George Lewis, one of his nephews, then staying at Mount Vernon], he fears, is not far from that place whence no traveller returns; he is but the shadow of what he was; has not been out of his room, scarcely out of his bed, for six weeks; has intervals of ease which flatter us a little, but he, the General, has little hope of his surviving the winter. It is so he writes of this nephew, adding that the subject gives him much distress. Concludes, "with sincere and affectionate regard I am always your friend, G. W."

The third is dated Mount Vernon, October 1, '92. In the expectation that this letter will find Mr. Lear again in Philadelphia, he wishes him to begin in time to compare all his former speeches to Congress with the subsequent acts of that body that he might see what parts of them passed altogether unnoticed or had been only partially noticed, that thus he might be enabled to judge whether any and what parts should be brought forward again. He requests him also, as before, to note everything that may occur to him as fit to be noticed in his communication to Congress this year, as he desires to have all the materials collected for his consideration in preparing his speech. He speaks again of the illness of "poor George," and says that others of his family are unwell. Concludes in his usually kind and affection manner.

[This session of Congress—the short session—came to its regular close on the 3d of March, 1793.] The General is again at Mount Vernon

in April, and writes to Mr. Lear on the 8th of that month on some of his private affairs. He tells him that his letter of the 3d had been received transmitting Mr. * * * * * * 's rental, and Mr. * * * * * 's profession of his inability to discharge his bond. The latter he thinks more candid than the former, but supposes that he must be satisfied with both, knowing he will never get better terms from either. He intimates that before doing anything with respect to the lands the latter had from him, he wishes Mr. Lear to have some conversation with * * * * on a point he (the General) did not clearly understand, as he would not "put it in the power of malice itself to charge him with any agency in measures that could be tortured into impropriety in this matter." In regard to the former person [the same mentioned in his letters of March 28 and April 3, '91, as having the charge of some of his property], he requests Mr. Lear to endeavor to find out through members of Congress, if he can, the name of some individual in the State in question who

would be likely to make him a faithful agent, as it would not do to leave his concerns in the hands of * * * * * any longer; he was too dependent, he feared (besides other objections to him), for his election to the legislature to fix his rents at a just medium, or collect them in the manner he ought to do. The conclusion of this letter has reference to the will of his deceased nephew, Mr. George Lewis, who had died at Mount Vernon.

Mr. Lear had now ceased to be his private Secretary; but the most intimate correspondence was still kept up with him. On the 21st of June, 1793, there is a letter to him from Philadelphia [Mr. L. then being in Georgetown], which the General writes on purpose to say that he considers it a very kind and friendly act in him to go to Mount Vernon. The letter finishes with a few lines of allusion to his private affairs.

Philadelphia, May 6, 1794. This is a letter written to Mr. Lear when the latter was in Eng-

land. It treats of private matters, and expresses his pleasure at the reception he had from the Earl of Buchan, Sir John Sinclair, and others in England to whom General Washington had given him letters. He tells him he was much obliged to him for the several communications in his letters, and placed great reliance on them; that the opportunities he derived from mixing with people in different walks, high and low, and of different political sentiments, must have afforded him an extensive range for observation and comparison; more so by far than could fall to the lot of a stationary person always revolving in a particular circle. The General then touches on our home affairs. [He was still President, it will be remembered.] He says that to tell him the British order in council of the 8th of June last respecting neutral vessels had given much discontent in the United States; and that that of the 6th of November had thrown the people into a flame, could hardly be new to him. In reference to all the existing difficulties with England he tells him

that many measures had been moved in Congress, some of which had passed into acts, and others were pending; that among the former was a law for fortifying our principal seaports, and another for raising an additional corps of eight hundred artillery-men for the defence of them and other purposes; and that the bills pending were: 1st. One to complete our present military establishment; 2d. One to raise an army of twenty-five thousand men in addition to it; and 3d. A bill to organize, put in training, and hold in readiness at a minute's warning a select corps of eighty thousand militia. He seemed to think that the first and last would pass, but that the result of the second could not be so well predicted. He mentions the appointment of Mr. Jay as special minister to England in the hope of settling all our difficulties in a temperate way by fair and firm negotiation, and that he would sail in a few days, with Mr. John Trumbell as his private Secretary; tells him also of Mr. Randolph's ap-

pointment as Secretary of State, and that Mr. Bradford, of Pennsylvania, was made Attorney General in Mr. Randolph's place. In conclusion, he alludes to "little Lincoln" [Mr. Lear's son] and his "lottery tickets," which, "poor little fellow!" he exclaims, will never be likely to build him a baby-house even; the whole Washington lottery business having turned out a bed of thorns rather than roses. He terminates the letter by telling him that his public avocations will not admit of more than a flying trip to Mount Vernon this summer, and that this not suiting Mrs. Washington he has taken a house in Germantown [the vicinity of Philadelphia] to avoid the heat of Philadelphia in July and August, and that Mrs. Washington, Nelly [one of the Miss Custis's], and the rest of the family united with him in every good wish for his health, prosperity, and safe return; and he begs him to be "assured of the sincerity with which he was and always should be his affectionate friend, G. W."

Mount Vernon, August 5, 1795. Mr. Lear had got back from England and was now residing in Georgetown or its neighborhood. The present letter incloses him a power of attorney to vote on the General's shares in the Potomac Company at a meeting of its stockholders to be held on the day following, in Georgetown. He says he would be there himself to vote in person if possible; but that having sent to the post-office in Alexandria every day since Friday for letters without receiving any from any of the officers of the government, he might probably receive a great accumulation of them on the day following [which was again Friday, and a post day], to which he would have to give his attention and prepare answers. It was therefore that he sent the power of attorney to meet the contingency of his not being present. This power of attorney was in his own handwriting.

Philadelphia, March 13, 1796. There are brief letters since the above that touch on private busi-

ness. In this of the 13th of March, 1796, alluding to his pecuniary affairs, he says, that for the few years he has to remain here, the enjoyment of less, with more ease and certainty, will be more convenient to him, and more desirable; had his resources been adequate to it, he would have purchased the lot and houses in Alexandria which Mr. Lear pointed out; but that as his resources depended on contingencies that might baffle his calculations, he chose to tread on sure ground in all his engagements, being as unwilling to embarrass others by uncertain contracts as to be deceived himself in his expectations.

Philadelphia, April 29, 1796. This is one of a few lines in which he requests Mr. Lear's acceptance of some garden seeds for his garden and farm. They were portions of some sent to him from England to be planted at Mount Vernon.

Philadelphia, November 16, 1796. This relates to the sale of some of his agricultural pro-

duce, and to the disappointments he had experienced in payments promised to him.

Mount Vernon, March 25, 1797. The General is now relieved from all public duties and cares. On the 3d of March of this year he ceased to be President by voluntarily retiring from the post after writing that farewell address which a British historian* has pronounced unequalled by any composition of uninspired wisdom. He is now a private citizen returned to his country estate at Mount Vernon on the banks of the Potomac. Mr. Lear is in Georgetown. In this letter to him of the 25th of March '97, he speaks of plans for repairing and refitting his ancient and loved home; but adds that in that rural vicinity he finds difficulty in getting proper workmen, and requests Mr. Lear's aid in procuring some from Georgetown, or the new "Federal City," [as Washington at that day was usually called.] Skill and dispatch would be

* Alison.

necessary qualifications, and he thinks that his "*Old Sergeant Cornelius*" might do for one of the workmen. It seems that this person had been heard of in those parts, and he adds that he would give him the preference as knowing his temper and industry.

Not long, however, is he permitted to remain a private citizen reposing at Mount Vernon amidst all its endearments. The next succeeding year finds him again summoned by his country to her service. At the eager solicitation of the government, the elder Adams then being President, and Mr. Adams' own desire being seconded by the nation's voice, he was prevailed upon to accept the supreme command of the Army during the difficulties and even quasi-war that had risen up with our old ally, France. He accepted on condition of receiving no pay or emolument until actually called into the field. Nevertheless this conditional acceptance threw upon him burdensome duties. It exposed him to "many official calls, to a heavy correspondence, and to a flow of

company." It is so he expresses himself. In this conjuncture he writes to his attached friend and faithful secretary Mr. Lear. Under date of August the second, 1798, from Mount Vernon, he describes to him those fresh duties as hindrances to putting his private affairs in that order so necessary before he embarked in new scenes; it being his desire, before quitting the scene of human action, to leave his concerns in such a condition as to give as little trouble as possible to those who would have the management of them afterwards. Under this view of his situation he had written to the Secretary of War to be informed whether he was at liberty to appoint his secretary, who should be entitled to the usual and proper allowances; and concludes with asking Mr. Lear if he would join him in that capacity if the Secretary of War answered in the affirmative. Mr. Lear assents.

This is the last letter in the series. I learn from Mrs. Lear that others not in this collection, bespeaking a high degree of intimacy and confi-

dence, were written to her husband by the same hand. This may well be conceived when it is known that Mr. Lear's connection with this illustrious man began prior to the year '86, and continued until his death in '99; that he was at his bedside when he died, and drew up the authentic narrative, which was verified by the physicians, of his last illness, from its commencement to the closing scene. This was published at that time to meet the anxious feelings of his mourning countrymen, struck down at first by his death as by a shock that went through every heart.

From one of the letters there dropped out, as I unfolded it, a slip in Mr. Lear's handwriting, dated May the first, 1791, containing the copy of a message to General Washington from Lord Cornwallis, of which Captain Truxton had been the bearer from the East Indies. His lordship, whom Captain Truxton had seen there, being then Governor General of India, "congratulated General Washington on the establishment of a

happy government in his country, and congratulated the country on the accession of General Washington to its Chief Magistracy." The message wished "General Washington a long enjoyment of tranquillity and happiness," adding that, for himself (Lord C.), he "continued in troubled waters."

I have thus noticed succinctly, perhaps I might more appropriately say described, these letters. In abridging and connecting the train of them, Washington's language is used to the extent that will be seen. The style is different from that of his official productions and other letters of his voluminous correspondence. He naturally stepped into one more familiar when writing to a confidential friend on family matters relating to his home at Mount Vernon, or as it was to be arranged in Philadelphia while he was President. But the style has the directness and sincerity of all his writings. It is apparent that the letters are written without reserve. With two or three

exceptions, no copies appear to have been kept; yet everything is frank and straight-forward. Understanding human nature thoroughly under all its phases, he deals wisely with men in small things as in great; but he does no one injustice. When others are acting disingenuously towards him, though seeing through it, he is considerate and forbearing, not taking steps hastily, but ready to make allowances where they could be made. Dishonesty or suspicion of it he never overlooks. In the second letter he suspects his steward of extravagance in spending too much for supplies of the table kept for his upper servants; yet he authorizes Mr. Lear to retain him, if, on looking into his accounts, he finds him honest; intimating that any successor to him might act in the same way, and a dismissal might be only a change without a benefit. His reprobation of all dishonesty is seen in more than one of the letters, as well as his restrained modes of dealing with it whilst affecting only his own interests.

As regards the minutiæ seen in the letters; the

details respecting his house, furniture, servants, carriages, horses, postilions, and so on, these will be read with curiosity and interest. They suggest a new test by which to try Washington, and let him be tried by it. We have not before had such details from himself. It is for the first time the curtain has been so lifted.

All great men, the very greatest, Cæsar, Cromwell, Napoleon, Frederick, Peter the Great, Marlborough, Alexander, all on the long list of towering names, have had contact with small things. No pinnacle in station, no supremacy in excellence or intellect, can exempt man from this portion of his lot. It is a human necessity. Washington goes into this sphere with a propriety and seemliness not always observable in others of his high cast, but often signally the reverse. In dealing with small things, he shows no undue tenacity of opinion; no selfishness; no petulance; no misplaced excitements. He never plays the petty tyrant. He does not forget himself; he does not forget others; he assumes nothing from any exal-

tation in himself, but is reasonable and provident in all his domestic and household arrangements.

Shall we seek for comparisons, or rather contrasts? With as much of Washington's domestic portraiture before us as these letters hold up, shall we turn to look at others? There is no difficulty, but in selecting from the vast heap.

Frederick thought coffee too expensive an indulgence for common use in his kingdom, saying he was himself reared on beer soup, which was surely good enough for peasants and common fellows, as he called his people. He wrote directions to his different cooks with his own hand the better to pamper his appetite with every variety of the dishes and sauces he liked best. He stinted Voltaire in sugar while a guest in his palace, or gave it to him cheap and bad. He praised him face to face, and ridiculed him behind his back. Napoleon played blind-man's buff at St. Helena. He lost his temper at his coronation on perceiving that some of the princesses of his family who were to act as trainbearers were not in their right

places. Cæsar was versed in all the ceremonials of State. It was said that he would even have been a perfect Roman gentleman but for a habit of putting one of his fingers in his hair. Yet such a master of forms gave grave offence to the Roman Senate by not rising when they intended him a compliment; so unwise was he in small things. Cromwell in a frolic threw a cushion at Ludlow, who in turn threw one at him. He bedaubed with ink the face of one of the justices, who, with Cromwell himself, had just been condemning Charles to the block. Peter the Great travelled about with a pet monkey, which unceremoniously jumped upon the King of England's shoulder when the latter visited the Czar in London. Some great men have played leap-frog; some practised this affectation, some that. The book of history records too amply the child-like diversions among those who have flourished on the summits of renown. We hear of none of this in Washington; no idle whimsies, no studied or foolish eccentricities; none of the buffoonery of ripe years.

They were not in him; or if they were, self-discipline extirpated them, as it did the bad ambition and moral callousness that have disfigured too many of the great names of the earth, ancient and modern; whilst his matchless purity and deathless deeds raise him above them all. This verdict is already more than half pronounced by the most enlightened and scrutinizing portions of mankind, and time is silently extending its domain as he is longer tried by the parallels of history, and by the philosophy of greatness itself.

Before his fame, steadily ascending from its adamantine foundation, gave signs that it was to encircle the globe, some imagined him too prudent. Some thought him devoid of sensibility; a cold, colossal mass, intrenched in taciturnity, or enfolded in a mantle of dignity. The sequel disclosed that his complete mastery over passion, moving in harmony with his other powers and faculties, lent its essential aid towards his unrivalled name. Opinion and passion were strong in him. The latter existed in vehemence; but

he put the curb upon it, turning it into right directions, and excluding it otherwise from influence upon his conduct. He stifled his dislikes; he was silent under sneers and disparaging innuendoes lest inopportune speech might work injury to the great cause confided to him. To the success of that cause he looked steadily and exclusively. It absorbed his whole soul, and he determined to concentrate upon it all his forbearance as well as energy. The complicated dangers which encompassed it he knew, from his position, sooner and better than others; but he would not make them public, lest the foe might hear them, or others whose prepossessions were unfriendly; preferring that temporary odium should rest upon himself. Therefore his reserve; and thus it was that the grand results of his life came out in manifold blessings to his country; thus it was that some at first distrustful, and others long distrustful, of his superiority, came to admit it in the end. Be it added, that his native good sense teaching him the value of social restraint, and his

knowledge of the world, its approved observances in intercourse, the tone of the gentleman on its best models ever also graced his public glory.

An anecdote I derived from Colonel Lear shortly before his death in 1816, may here be related, showing the height to which his passion would rise yet be controlled. It belongs to his domestic life which I am dealing with, having occurred under his own roof, whilst it marks public feeling the most intense, and points to the moral of his life. I give it in Colonel Lear's words as nearly as I can, having made a note of them at the time.

Towards the close of a winter's day in 1791, an officer in uniform was seen to dismount in front of the President's in Philadelphia, and, giving the bridle to his servant, knock at the door of his mansion. Learning from the porter that the President was at dinner, he said he was on public business and had dispatches for the President. A servant was sent into the dining-room to give the information to Mr. Lear, who left the table and went into the hall where the officer re-

peated what he had said. Mr. Lear replied that, as the President's Secretary, he would take charge of the dispatches and deliver them at the proper time. The officer made answer that he had just arrived from the western army, and his orders were to deliver them with all promptitude, and to the President in person; but that he would wait his directions. Mr. Lear returned, and in a whisper imparted to the President what had passed. General Washington rose from the table, and went to the officer. He was back in a short time, made a word of apology for his absence, but no allusion to the cause of it. He had company that day. Everything went on as usual. Dinner over, the gentlemen passed to the drawing-room of Mrs. Washington, which was open in the evening. The General spoke courteously to every lady in the room, as was his custom. His hours were early, and by ten o'clock all the company had gone. Mrs. Washington and Mr. Lear remained. Soon Mrs. Washington left the room.

The General now walked backward and forward

slowly for some minutes without speaking. Then he sat down on a sofa by the fire, telling Mr. Lear to sit down. To this moment there had been no change in his manner since his interruption at table. Mr. Lear now perceived emotion. This rising in him, he broke out suddenly, "*It's all over —St. Clair's defeated—routed ;—the officers nearly all killed, the men by wholesale ; the route complete —too shocking to think of—and a surprise into the bargain!*"

He uttered all this with great vehemence. Then he paused, got up from the sofa and walked about the room several times, agitated but saying nothing. Near the door he stopped short and stood still a few seconds, when his wrath became terrible.

"*Yes,*" he burst forth, "HERE *on this very spot, I took leave of him ; I wished him success and honor ; you have your instructions, I said, from the Secretary of War, I had a strict eye to them, and will add but one word*—BEWARE OF A SURPRISE. *I repeat it,* BEWARE OF A SURPRISE—*you*

know how the Indians fight us. He went off with that as my last solemn warning thrown into his ears. And yet!! to suffer that army to be cut to pieces, hack'd, butchered, tomahawk'd, by a surprise—the very thing I guarded him against!! O God, O God, he's worse than a murderer! how can he answer it to his country;—the blood of the slain is upon him—the curse of widows and orphans—the curse of Heaven!"

This torrent came out in tones appalling. His very frame shook. It was awful, said Mr. Lear. More than once he threw his hands up as he hurled imprecations upon St. Clair. Mr. Lear remained speechless; awed into breathless silence.

The roused Chief sat down on the sofa once more. He seemed conscious of his passion, and uncomfortable. He was silent. His warmth beginning to subside, he at length said in an altered voice: "*This must not go beyond this room.*" Another pause followed—a longer one—when he said in a tone quite low, "*General St. Clair shall have*

justice ; I looked hastily through the dispatches, saw the whole disaster but not all the particulars ; I will receive him without displeasure ; I will hear him without prejudice ; he shall have full justice."

He was now, said Mr. Lear, perfectly calm. Half an hour had gone by. The storm was over; and no sign of it was afterwards seen in his conduct or heard in his conversation. The result is known. The whole case was investigated by Congress. St. Clair was exculpated and regained the confidence Washington had in him when appointing him to that command. He had put himself into the thickest of the fight and escaped unhurt, though so ill as to be carried on a litter, and unable to mount his horse without help.

A passage from one of Mr. Jefferson's letters which the historian Sparks records, may here be given, as its spirit covers the private as well as public life of Washington. Mr. Jefferson withdrew his services as Secretary of State from the administration of Washington towards the close of his first term in the Presidency. His retire-

ment from that post took place when party spirit was violent and bitter in the extreme; never was it more so in the annals of our country; and it was known that he had differed from Washington on political questions of the greatest importance. Nevertheless, writing of him at a later period Mr. Jefferson says: "His integrity was most pure; his justice the most inflexible I have ever known; no motives of interest or consanguinity, of friendship or hatred, being able to bias his decision. He was, indeed, in every sense of the word, a wise, a good, and a great man."

I return to his letters to Mr. Lear. In superintending his domestic affairs, these letters exhibit him as the head of a well-ordered family, himself the regulator of it all under maxims that best conduce to order because not too rigid. We see that he was truly hospitable; kind; devoted to his kindred whom he gathers around him, interesting himself in their education and welfare; cheering them with a welcome at Mount Vernon, and soothing them in sickness and sorrow. The kin-

dred of Mrs. Washington alike share his solicitudes, paternal care, and constant kindness. All this is discernible from the facts that drop out in these letters. They point to a heart affectionately alive to the best social and family feelings. We see his attention to the comfort of his servants, slaves, and others. His government of them, upper and subordinate, appears to have been perfect by his union of discipline with liberality. He knew that his postilions, if they slept over the stable, would carry lights there whether he forbade it or not, for they would do it when he knew nothing about it and not tell on each other. He therefore allowed no sleeping there at all.

I could not avoid remarking, as characteristic throughout the whole of this correspondence, that there is never any complaining of his labors. Letter-writing alone would have been a heavy labor to him but for his system and industry. Promptitude in using his pen there must necessarily have been, or he could not have written so much. The history of the times will show that

when he wrote these letters he was simultaneously writing others on public business, which, as the world knows, he never neglected in any jot or tittle no matter what else he might be doing. The domestic letters must therefore have been struck off with great facility. Let us call to mind also the more than two hundred volumes of folio manuscript of his public correspondence which Congress purchased, and then remember that the sum of all he wrote is as nothing to what he *did* in his long career of activity in his country's service, military and civil.

Next I remark, as a new corroboration of the modesty ever so prominent in him, that not once throughout the whole of this correspondence does he make any, the slightest, allusion to himself in connection with the Revolutionary War, comparatively recent as it then was. Besides that the general tenor of the correspondence might have supplied occasions for such allusions, special opportunities were at hand while skirting the battle-grounds and other localities of his military opera-

tions in the war, even in his journeys between Mount Vernon and Philadelphia; yet they are never once made. The casual mention of his "*Old Sergeant Cornelius*," whom he happened to want as a workman about his grounds at Mount Vernon, is the sole reference that could wake up the mind to his having had anything to do with the Revolution. He had helped to pave the way for that great event by the influence of his high character thrown into the scale when the early questions of resistance or submission were in agitation; he had helped it on by his attachment to constitutional liberty at that epoch though his fortune was at stake, and friendships among the high-born and cultivated from the parent State then among his associates in Virginia—could a bosom like his have been swayed by such thoughts; he had helped it on by the special weight of name he had won in arms fighting side by side with the proud generals and troops of Britain confident of victory, but saved from annihilation by his inborn fearlessness and superiority, when death was all

around him and dismay everywhere in Braddock's disastrous fight—their silent homage crowning the head of their deliverer; his triumphant sword at Yorktown put the crowning hand to the immortal work—the work that founded this great nation; yet we could never infer from a word or hint in the course of these letters, from first to last, that he had anything to do with the work, except as the name of "*Sergeant Cornelius*" incidentally falls from his pen with only a rural object. What a lesson! Some extol themselves openly. Some do it under cover of self-humiliation, called by a French writer the pomp of modesty. Washington is simply silent; he will slide into no allusions to the great and glorious work of his life in the midst of temptations to it.

Finally: the charm of these letters is in their being so familiar, so out of the sphere of his correspondence generally, and therefore holding him up in lights that seem new. Mankind, long familiar with the external attributes and grandeur of

his character, looking up to his vast fame as hero and statesman uncertain which predominates, have known less of him at home with his family, his relations and his friends. The inner parts of his character, the kindlier impulses of his nature, his sympathies with those dear to him, dependent on him, or looking to him for the solace of his kindness, seem to have remained less publicly known. Mr. Sparks, in his preface to his "Life and Writings," remarks that "it must be kept in mind that much the larger portion of his life passed on a conspicuous public theatre, and that no account of it can be written which will not assume essentially the air of history." He adds, that while in his work "anecdotes are interwoven and such incidents of a private and personal nature as are known, they are more rare than could be desired."

The synopsis of the letters which I have given may perhaps tend in some small degree to supply this desideratum in his illustrious life alongside of

the more copious anecdotes and reminiscences supplied by the patriotic and filial devotion of Mr. Custis. This is my humble hope.

Since the foregoing Letters were received from Mrs. Lear, she has favored me with the perusal of other manuscripts introducing us to the domestic hours of General Washington. Among them is a Diary kept by Mr. Lear at Mount Vernon in 1786, anterior therefore to the time when Washington became President. From this document I am permitted to copy a passage entire. It is dated the 23d of October, '86. Mr. Drayton and Mr. Izard, gentlemen of South Carolina, had been spending the day at Mount Vernon. After dinner, the company still round the table, Washington was led to speak of Arnold's treason, and Mr. Lear wrote down his account of it in his Diary of that day. Although history has made us familiar with that whole transaction in its essential facts, to hear it under such circumstances from the lips of Washington, seems to impart to it new interest.

We listen with revived curiosity and attention when such a narrator speaks. The copy from Mr. Lear's Diary, in which is recorded this interesting dinner-table narrative, is in the words following:—

"MOUNT VERNON,
Monday, October 23d, 1786.

"Mrs. Washington went to Arlington with the two children. Sent a letter directed to Mr. Samuel Storer to the post-office by Charles, who went up to town (Alexandria) with Master Thompson and Lawrence Washington, who had spent their vacation here. Mr. Drayton and Mr. Izard here all day. After dinner General Washington was, in the course of conversation, led to speak of Arnold's treachery, when he gave the following account of it, which I shall put in his own words, thus: 'I confess I had a good opinion of Arnold before his treachery was brought to light; had that not been the case, I should have had some reason to suspect him sooner, for when

he commanded in Philadelphia, the Marquis la Fayette brought accounts from France of the armament which was to be sent to co-operate with us in the ensuing campaign. Soon after this was known, Arnold pretended to have some private business to transact in Connecticut, and on his way there he called at my quarters; and in the course of conversation expressed a desire of quitting Philadelphia and joining the army the ensuing campaign. I told him that it was probable we should have a very active one, and that if his wound and state of health would permit, I should be extremely glad of his services with the army. He replied that he did not think his wound would permit him to take a very active part; but still he persisted in his desire of being with the army. He went on to Connecticut, and on his return called again upon me. He renewed his request of being with me next campaign, and I made him the same answer I had done before. He again repeated that he did not think his wound would permit him to do active duty, and

intimated a desire to have the command at West Point. I told him I did not think that would suit him, as I should leave none in the garrison but invalids, because it would be entirely covered by the main army. The subject was dropt at that time, and he returned to Philadelphia. It then appeared somewhat strange to me, that a man of Arnold's known activity and enterprise, should be desirous of taking so inactive a part. I however thought no more of the matter. When the French troops arrived at Rhode Island, I had intelligence from New York that General Clinton intended to make an attack upon them before they could get themselves settled and fortified. In consequence of that, I was determined to attack New York, which would be left much exposed by his drawing off the British troops; and accordingly formed my line of battle, and moved down with the whole army to King's ferry, which we passed. Arnold came to camp at that time, and having no command, and consequently no quarters (all the houses thereabouts being occupied by

the army), he was obliged to seek lodgings at some distance from the camp. While the army was crossing at King's ferry, I was going to see the last detachment over, and met Arnold, who asked me if I had thought of anything for him. I told him that he was to have the command of the light troops, which was a post of honor, and which his rank indeed entitled him to. Upon this information his countenance changed, and he appeared to be quite fallen; and instead of thanking me, or expressing any pleasure at the appointment, never opened his mouth. I desired him to go on to my quarters and get something to refresh himself, and I would meet him there soon. He did so. Upon his arrival there, he found Col. Tilghman, whom he took a-one side, and mentioning what I had told him, seemed to express great uneasiness at it—as his leg, he said, would not permit him to be long on horse-back; and intimated a great desire to have the command at West Point. When I returned to my quarters, Col. Tilghman informed me of what had passed. I made no reply to it—

but his behavior struck me as strange and unaccountable. In the course of that night, however, I received information from New York that General Clinton had altered his plan and was debarking his troops. This information obliged me likewise to alter my disposition and return to my former station, where I could better cover the country. I then determined to comply with Arnold's desire, and accordingly gave him the command of the garrison at West Point. Things remained in this situation about a fortnight, when I wrote to the Count Rochambeau desiring to meet him at some intermediate place (as we could neither of us be long enough from our respective commands to visit the other), in order to lay the plan for the siege of Yorktown, and proposed Hartford, where I accordingly went and met the Count. On my return I met the Chevalier Luzerne towards evening within about 15 miles of West Point (on his way to join the Count at Rhode Island), which I intended to reach that night, but he insisted upon turning back with me to the next public house;

where, in politeness to him, I could not but stay all night, determining, however, to get to West Point to breakfast very early. I sent off my baggage, and desired Colonel Hamilton to go forward and inform General Arnold that I would breakfast with him. Soon after he arrived at Arnold's quarters, a letter was delivered to Arnold which threw him into the greatest confusion. He told Colonel Hamilton that something required his immediate attendance at the garrison which was on the opposite side of the river to his quarters; and immediately ordered a horse, to take him to the river; and the barge, which he kept to cross, to be ready; and desired Major Franks, his Aid, to inform me when I should arrive, that he was gone over the river and would return immediately. When I got to his quarters and did not find him there, I desired Major Franks to order me some breakfast; and as I intended to visit the fortifications I would see General Arnold there. After I had breakfasted, I went over the river, and inquiring for Arnold, the commanding officer told

me that he had not been there. I likewise inquired at the several redoubts, but no one could give me any information where he was. The impropriety of his conduct when he knew I was to be there, struck me very forcibly, and my mind misgave me; but I had not the least idea of the real cause. When I returned to Arnold's quarters about two hours after, and told Colonel Hamilton that I had not seen him, he gave me a packet which had just arrived for me from Col. Jemmison, which immediately brought the matter to light. I ordered Colonel Hamilton to mount his horse and proceed with the greatest despatch to a post on the river about eight miles below, in order to stop the barge if she had not passed; but it was too late. It seems that the letter which Arnold received which threw him in such confusion was from Col. Jemmison, informing him that Andre was taken and that the papers found upon him were in his possession. Col. Jemmison, when Andre was taken with these papers, could not believe that Arnold was a traitor, but rather

thought it was an imposition of the British in order to destroy our confidence in Arnold. He, however, immediately on their being taken, despatched an express after me, ordering him to ride night and day till he came up with me. The express went the lower road, which was the road by which I had gone to Connecticut, expecting that I would return by the same route, and that he would meet me; but before he had proceeded far, he was informed that I was returning by the upper road. He then cut across the country and followed in my track till I arrived at West Point. He arrived about two hours after, and brought the above packet. When Arnold got down to the barge, he ordered his men, who were very clever fellows and some of the better sort of soldiery, to proceed immediately on board the Vulture sloop of war, as a flag, which was lying down the river; saying that they must be very expeditious, as he must return in a short time to meet me, and promised them two gallons of rum if they would exert themselves. They did, accordingly; but when

they got on board the Vulture, instead of their two gallons of rum, he ordered the coxswain to be called down into the cabin and informed him that he and the men must consider themselves as prisoners. The coxswain was very much astonished, and told him that they came on board under the sanction of a flag. He answered that that was nothing to the purpose; they were prisoners. But the Captain of the Vulture had more generosity than this pitiful scoundrel, and told the coxswain that he would take his parole for going on shore to get clothes, and whatever else was wanted for himself and his companions. He accordingly came, got his clothes and returned on board. When they got to New York, General Clinton, ashamed of so low and mean an action, set them all at liberty."

This closes the account. It terminates also the use I have been permitted, through the valued friendship of Mrs. Lear, to make of these manuscripts.

R. R.

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MDZ Münchener DigitalisierungsZentrum Digitale Bibliothek

Rush, Richard

Washington in domestic life From original letters and manuscripts

Philadelphia 1857

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